

Civil Law: Recommendations for Pastoral Ministers, DREs and Youth Ministers

Know what your contract, handbook and other appropriate documents say. Enforce the rules these contain.

Establish rules for behavior. Be sure to make the rules known to those affected. Be sure young people understand the rules and the consequences for not following them. Be consistent in enforcing rules. Posting and/or distributing rules may be helpful.

No matter how angry you may become, never discipline someone without explaining what he/she did wrong and allowing the individual to explain the behavior.

Never give medication to a person without proper authorization.

Take every reasonable precaution to insure the safety of those in your care. Report any unsafe building or other conditions to the pastor or other appropriate person.

Do not leave children unattended unless absolutely necessary. If necessary, be sure they know what to do and/or ask another adult to be watchful over the children.

Don't make unnecessary comments about students either orally or in writing. If it is necessary to make a statements about conduct or performance, be sure comments are specific, behavior oriented, and verifiable. Example: Bobby was absent three Confirmation classes, tardy two days and was sent to the office for fighting three time rather than saying something like 'Bobby is absent most of the time, late the rest of the time, and always in trouble.'

If an accident occurs in an area under your supervision, notify the pastor immediately and document the specifics as soon as possible.

Never keep a confidence that could result in injury to self or others. Tell you students, "I will keep your confidences so long as no one's life, health, or safety is at stake. Once life, health or safety is at stake, I must reveal what you tell me."

Insist that persons respect the dignity of all. Do not tolerate unkind, demeaning, harassing or other inappropriate behavior.

WHEN IN DOUBT: ask yourself, "What would a reasonable person do in these circumstances?" or "If someone else were in this situation, what would I advise him or her to do?" of the most important question, "What would Jesus do?"